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**US ARMY RESERVE (USAR)
ACTIVE GUARD (AGR) FORCE:
SHAPING IMPLICATIONS**

BY

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US ARMY RESERVE (USAR) ACTIVE GUARD RESERVE (AGR) FORCE: SHAPING IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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The increased operational tempo and multiple deployments by United States Army Reserve (USAR) units in support of continuous operational engagements since 9/11 have contributed to the transformation of the Army Reserve from a 'strategic' to an 'operational' force. To support this dynamic transformation, the Chief of the Army Reserve (CAR) is actively pursuing shaping measures to adjust the structure, personnel management and employment of the USAR Active Guard Reserve (AGR) force. The current USAR AGR program has evolved over the years and has gone through many changes since its inception in the early 1980s. Originally designed to support a strategic force, adjustments and even total elimination of the AGR program are being considered. This study will discuss the current USAR AGR program from its development, stated objectives, personnel management capabilities, accession process, and the allocation of its AGR Soldiers. It will also highlight the options and initiatives revealed in the *Army Reserve Strategy for Full-time Support (FTS) 2017* study published in September 2008 to increase the effectiveness of the current Full-time support program, and shape the system in the future. In the end, it will propose

fundamental changes to the AGR program that when implemented will both enhance the operational capability of the AGR Soldier and increase the warfighting capability of the Army.

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US ARMY RESERVE (USAR) ACTIVE GUARD RESERVE (AGR) FORCE: SHAPING IMPLICATIONS

Background

Development of the USAR AGR Program

The demand for the number of AGR Soldiers on active duty to support the Army Reserve has grown over the years since the program's inception and continues to evolve as the US Army Reserve (USAR) transforms from a 'strategic' to an 'operational' force. The Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program was initially created in February 1979, by combining a number of active duty statutes. By June 1980, 1,276 Army Reserve Soldiers had been brought on active duty in AGR status. By 1984, there were more than 7,000 AGR Soldiers on duty. At the end of September 2000, there were almost 13,000 AGRs in the Army Reserve.¹ Today, in response to competing demands and continued operational commitments, we now have over 16,000 AGR Soldiers to support an Army Reserve force of over 218,000.

The AGR program is just one element of full-time capability used to 'man' the Army Reserve on a daily basis. The total full-time support program is comprised of three distinct personnel elements: AGR Soldiers, DA civilians, and military technicians. The latter two elements are beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to understand that they exist and that all three are vital to meeting the demands of an 'operational Army Reserve force.'

Congressionally approved funding levels and full-time authorization allowances dictate the amount and type of full-time personnel allowed in the USAR FTS program. AGR Soldiers assignments are very diverse. The majority of AGR assignments are in

leadership and staff positions throughout the Army Reserve. However, some AGR Soldiers are assigned to the Active Component (AC) and Joint Service units to meet the demands of the entire Armed Forces.

The *2006-2007 Army Reserve Biannual Review* describes AGR Soldiers as a valuable enabler to the success of the Army Reserve. The review states that during the past several years AGRs have served in the following capacities:

- “as critical operations personnel who planned the training to move Soldiers through ARFORGEN,
- as human resources personnel that directed the life cycle management of unit personnel to make certain the right Soldier was in the right place at the right time,
- and as logisticians who ensured that adequate levels of equipment and supplies were on-hand, at a high level of readiness, to support pre-deployment and post deployment activities of USAR units.”²

USAR AGR Program Objective

Army Regulation (AR) 135-18 states that the objective of the AGR Program is to “provide highly qualified officers, warrant officers, and enlisted Soldiers to meet the full time support requirements for ARNGUS and USAR projects and programs.”³ The primary objective of the AGR program serves as the main focus of this paper, which will describe how the Army Reserve is moving forward to stay on the leading edge of manning and achieving the objective of the program.

AR 135-18 also states that “the primary mission responsibilities of AGRs include organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the RC”⁴ so that they are prepared and ready to mobilize and deploy units when called upon to support the Army

Plan. These responsibilities are not necessarily all inclusive, and in recent years they have made the transition into leading and growing units versus just ‘keeping the lights on.’ Most often, AGRs are called upon do whatever it takes to maintain daily operations and prepare USAR units in becoming a vital operationally effective ‘force multiplier’.

The AGR Force must be capable of meeting the Chief of the Army Reserve (CAR)’s, mission statement as outlined in the *2007 Army Reserve Posture Statement*. In this document the current CAR, Lieutenant General Jack C. Stultz, states “As Chief of the Army Reserve, my mission is to build and sustain our operational force into a flexible, responsive and dynamic organization that is fully manned, trained and equipped to support our Army and our Nation.”⁵ This statement directly underscores the importance of the AGR program in the Army Reserve, whose objectives are ‘nested’ with the CARs mission statement and as such are dependent upon each other to be successful. To maintain the future success with the AGR program, the USAR must continually strive to recruit and retain professional and operationally effective AGR Soldiers who are capable of supporting the transformation of the AR. In summary, the ultimate objective of the AGR program is to support the operational needs of the AR Troop Program Unit (TPU) by performing the tasks outlined in 135-18 and any other duties as needed to achieve the CAR’s objective.

Personnel Management

Prior to 19 November 2008, the AGR administrative, assignment and career management functions were performed solely by the Army Reserve under the Army Reserve Active Duty Management Directorate (ARADMD) headquarters in Saint Louis, Missouri. Preceding this, ARADMD worked autonomously in developing guidance and

implementing policy that served to achieve the goals of the USAR Leadership and the CAR.

In November 2008, the Army consolidated its personnel management functions. This was an effort to comply with the requirement to achieve the “Army-wide initiative to integrate all aspects of personnel management, while concurrently complementing the fielding of the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS).”⁶ The result was the combining of the U.S. Army Human Resources Command-St. Louis (HRC-STL) integrated career management functions for Active Guard Reserve (AGR), Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA), and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Soldiers⁷ in order to achieve “full integration and a comprehensive life-cycle management system for all Soldiers, Retirees and Veterans, without regard to component.”⁸ Coordinating this effort brought together the Development Directorate (DD) from the Active Component and ARADMD from the Army Reserve to establish two entirely new Directorates renamed as the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate (EPMD), and the Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD). The concept for establishing these newly combined directorates was to help “manage the AC and AR Soldiers by function rather than category,”⁹ so that we would no longer see isolation of these personnel functions between the two components.

The joining of USAR and AC HRCs continues to progress. However the ability to consolidate personnel and pay records in to one system with other Components and Joint Services through DIMHRS will not occur anytime soon. Just recently the “Department of Defense (DOD) announced that they were ‘pulling the plug’ on the fielding of DIMHRS and that each service should seek ways to improve on its existing

personnel and pay systems while potentially incorporating benefits of the DIMHRS efforts where practicable.”¹⁰

As with any new merge, the result of this consolidation of entities into one ‘enterprise’ is still to be determined. However, it is reasonable to surmise that while working alone to manage a project or program may give you greater direct control and flexibility to change the course of action at will, combining resources for entities that have command goals can help you achieve ‘greater efficiencies’. In the future, the Army will achieve these ‘efficiencies’ by consolidating Army Personnel Management agencies and eventual reap significant rewards by streamlining the AC and RC personnel management programs.

The Accession Process

AR 135-18 and AR 140-10 govern the selection process of soldiers into the AGR program. AR 135-18 states that “the Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) and Chief, Army Reserve (CAR) will establish procedures to verify the eligibility of applicants for the AGR Program. Validated applicants become part of a list of Soldiers eligible and available for consideration for orders to Active Duty (AD) or Full-time National Guard Duty (FTNGD) in AGR status.”¹¹ Previously, the USAR would hold selection boards on an annual basis and place qualified candidates on an ‘Order of Merit List’ (OML) until needed to fill critical vacancies in the program. Since these annual boards are no longer held, the procedure for accession into the AGR program has recently changed so that Soldiers self nominate through the 2xCitizen website and are placed on a ‘watch list’¹² until they are needed to fill positions within the program. Once the Soldiers are on

a ‘watch list’ USAR career managers and accession team members vet candidates to fill authorized vacancies.¹³

The number of Soldiers accessed into the AGR program on an annual basis varies and is heavily dependent upon the amount of funds available in the operating budget to ‘man the force.’ Funding constraints limit the USAR from filling 100 percent of the authorized AGR positions. Deciding on the right mix of AGR positions to fill on an annual basis requires significant work and prioritization to ensure that the program realizes its greatest potential.

The accession of new Soldiers requires that HRC endure deliberate analytical processes to determine the precise skills sets needed for service on Active Duty in support of the USAR. HRC constantly reviews AGR force authorizations and manning priorities to determine the proper amount of these skill sets needed to support the force; while also considering both short and long-term accession program objectives. Ultimately, the prevailing consideration when accessing Soldiers into the program is made by evaluating the current relative strength of each individual branch and the number of Soldiers in each year group.¹⁴ Once this requirement is determined, it is then weighed against the manning priorities for USAR units based on the ARFORGEN (Army Force Generation) cycle to realize the final numbers and types of Soldiers to fill in the system.

USAR AGR Force Allocation

The allocation of AGR Soldier assignments within the AGR program is essential to maintaining balance and functional support to an ‘operational reserve.’ Figure 1 depicts the disposition and allocation of AGRs as of 11 Nov 2009. Currently, about two-

thirds of the USAR AGR authorizations are in 'below the line' units supporting operational USAR MTOE units while the remaining one-third fill authorizations in 'above the line' units. Although these numbers can fluctuate based on the needs of the Army Reserve, this dispersion is considered the norm for the AGR force in the last several years. Note that only about 76 percent of the authorizations are in direct support of USAR units, while the remaining are used to fill authorizations at DOD, Unified Commands, and MACOMs.

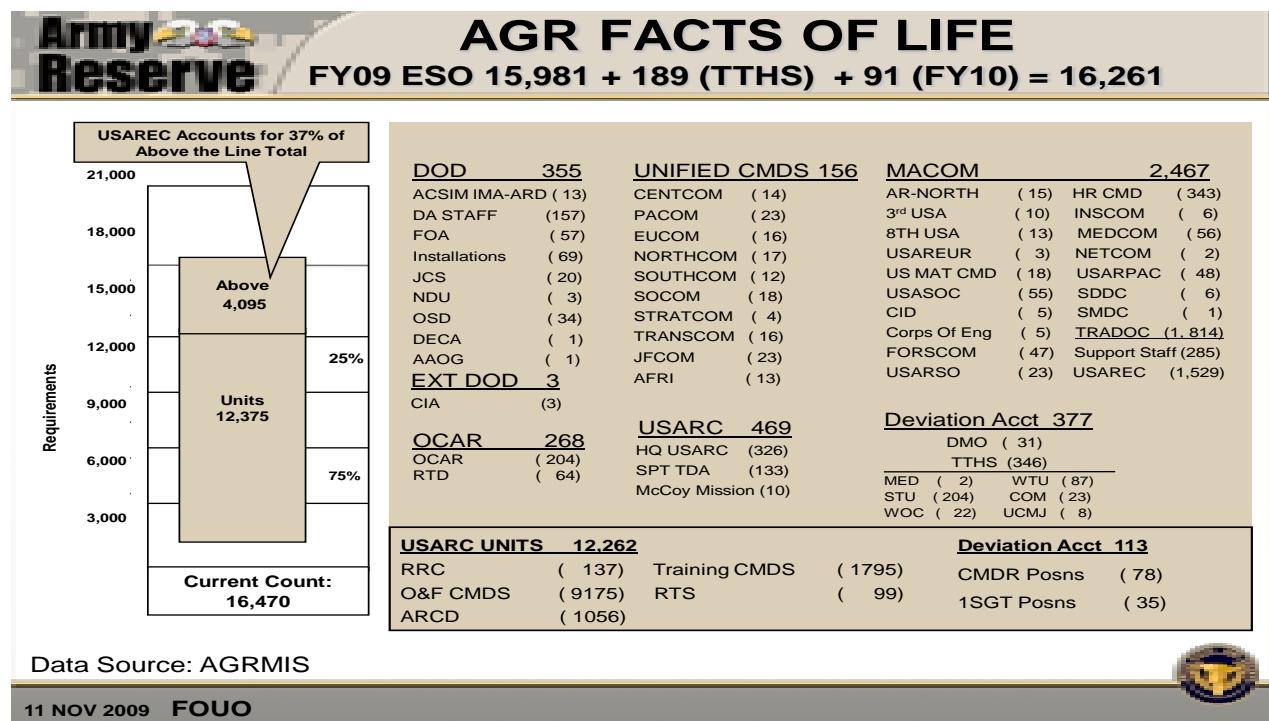


Figure 1 AGR FACTS OF LIFE¹⁵

Figure 2 depicts the total number of authorizations from FY 05 to FY 12. Starting in FY 05 the AGR cap was 14,970 and has steadily increased due to CAR approving increases in authorizations up to 16,261 in FY 09. This 'RAMP' to the AGR end-strength was critical in mitigating the full-time support requirements brought on by

continued deployments over the last eight years in support of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and the transformation of the Army Reserve to an ‘operational’ force.

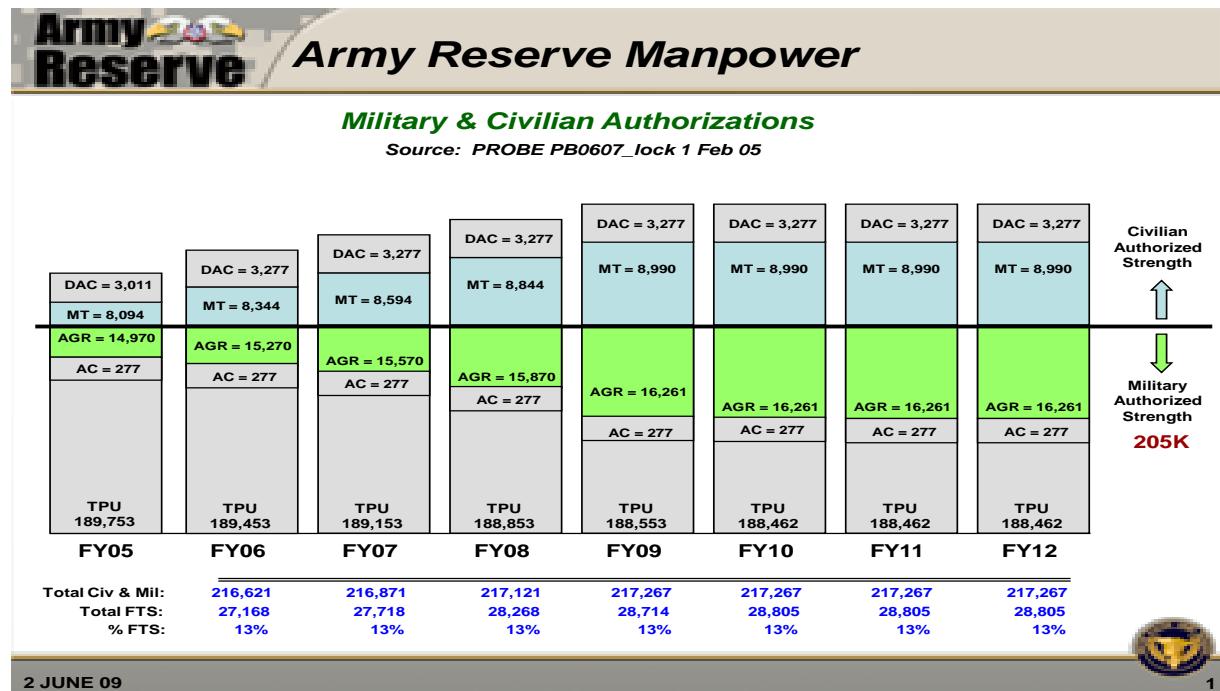


Figure 2 Army Reserve Manpower¹⁶

Shaping Efforts

Recommendations from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

The Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 facilitated the establishment of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR). As such, “Congress tasked the Commission to report on the roles and missions of the Reserve Components in terms of their capabilities that they may use to achieve national security objectives, homeland security objectives, and homeland defense; as well as their compensation and benefits and the effects of possible changes in the areas of military careers, readiness, recruitment, and retention; and on traditional and alternative career paths...”¹⁷

The initial direction from Congress to the Commission was to develop three reports during the subsequent years concluding with a final report in FY 08. The first report was to inform Congress on the status of the Commission's organization and their progress of work.¹⁸ The second report, '*Transforming America's Defenses in the New Security Environment*',¹⁹ and the final report submitted in April 2008, '*Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st-Century Operational Force*',²⁰ would identify multiple options to improve the state of the Army Reserve and National Guard by offering six major conclusions and 95 recommendations supported by 163 findings.²¹

Congress considered the development of the Commission as "the first forum in the past 60 years to take the most comprehensive, independent review of the National Guard and Reserve Forces"²² that when completed would "result in actionable issues that would merit review from the legislative and executive branches."²³ Supporting the Commission's findings were in-depth personal interviews with families, Soldiers, and civilians from the Guard and Reserve community during multiple site visits to Guard and Reserve locations throughout the nation. It also included 17 days of public hearings involving 115 witnesses, 52 Commission meetings, and more than 850 interviews with officials and other subject matter experts, including the current and former Secretaries of Defense and current and former Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.²⁴

The Commission's intent was to take an all-encompassing look into the functions and capabilities of the Reserves and National Guard (NG). However, this paper focuses solely on the full-time support portion of the study and highlights the recommendations made by the Commission in the areas of USAR AGR career path

improvement and the future structure of the USAR AGR force. Many of the Commissions' recommendations to improve the quality of the USAR AGR are not that complex and when applied will progress the force closer to meeting its operational objective. Conversely, some recommendations require extreme modifications to the current AGR program that are more complex and necessitate considerable commitments from the Army to ensure continual support of the full-time requirements of an 'Operational Army Reserve.'

The Commission notes in the report "that there are significant issues with funding constraints in support of the full-time programs for the Reserves."²⁵ It also states that there is "no viable means to review and validate full-time requirements in Reserve units and in many cases there is evidence of inadequate levels of full-time support resident in units at companies and smaller units."²⁶ The Commission directed a comprehensive review to properly "examine the full-time requirements that are needed to support an operational reserve force, while also taking into consideration the requirements needed to support DOD's homeland and civil support missions."²⁷

In Part IV C of the final report, the Commission proposes changes to the full-time support capabilities of the Reserves. It specifically states that "all reserve component full-time support personnel must be the best-qualified individuals, selected for these billets on the basis of their knowledge, skills and abilities to fulfill unit full-time support needs...."²⁸ As a Reserve Soldier for the past 22 years who's had the distinct opportunity to work with other USAR and NG AGR Soldiers, TPU Soldiers and Army civilians; I can attest that this recommendation is absolutely critical in maintaining the balance and operational readiness in our USAR and NG units alike. Although this

recommendation may not seem very significant, it is imperative that we strive to achieve this recommendation as we continue to transition the USAR to an ‘operational’ capability. In order to keep pace with increasing operational requirements, the USAR must continue to hire and maintain the most flexible, adaptive and operationally experienced full-time staff to support, train, and equip USAR units on a daily basis.

The report further recommends that “members of the full-time force must also be required to serve periodic tours with the Active Component, in operational forces or in total force assignments at joint or service-level headquarters”²⁹ so that they increase their operational experience and enhance their ability to be more competitive during their career. This recommendation will serve to broaden the experience levels of AGR Soldiers by exposing them to issues and actions not normally associated with service in the USAR. It will also increase their marketability within the Active Component and the Joint community and on Army competitive boards by requiring them to serve in some of the same units and positions normally reserved for Active Component Soldiers. This type of approach to blending the AGR force with the active and joint community will certainly be a major step forward in achieving a ‘One Army Force’ capable of handling diverse assignments as directed by the Department of Defense (DOD).

The final recommendation describes how they envision the fundamental shaping of the USAR AGR system in the future. The Commission recommends that “the Army should replace all Army Reserve Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) personnel with Active Component Soldiers who have recent operational experience serving in rotational tours.”³⁰ However, they do not see this as being an immediate resolution, and specifically state that “this should be a phased transition while protecting the careers of

AGRs currently in the program.”³¹ This is by far the most significant recommendation in the report that if acted on will totally re-shape the future of the AGR program. If this extreme change were implemented, it would require significant personnel assignment agreements between the USAR and Active Army to be effective. The USAR would need assurance of a certain level of return to readily hand over its program to the Active Army. Accessing new Active Army Soldiers to fill these additional personnel requirements would take considerable time, and if the Army is presented with the requirement it is likely that most of these billets will be filled with current AGR soldiers already in the system. This immediate solution would be a ‘zero sum’ game in the beginning of the transition but over time the Army would most likely have no issue coming up with additional 16k of qualified soldiers to fill the existing USAR AGR requirements.

Army Reserve Way Ahead

Initiatives are currently underway in the USAR to help shape the USAR force of the future. One area of great interest to the CAR and Senior Leadership in the USAR is the structure and future state of its Full-Time Support (FTS) program. Recognizing that the current FTS program originated to support a strategic force the CAR directed an internal review to determine the means to transform his FTS program into a force capable of meeting the growing demands of an ‘Operational Reserve.’

The CAR’s vision for the future of the program is that “when fully realized, the transformed FTS capabilities will achieve efficiencies of scale providing the requisite FTS capabilities to the correct unit, at the right time, and at the right place.”³² Since AGR Soldiers and FTS personnel are in high demand throughout the USAR, we can

interpret this vision as a directive for the USAR to transform its normal procedure of assigning Soldiers to units based solely on authorizations, to a more flexible assignment procedure that allows for the timely placement of Soldiers into units when they're needed regardless of valid authorization, while simultaneously supporting the 'manning' priorities of the ARFORGEN Cycle.

Shaping the AGR program to meet the needs of an 'Operational Reserve' will not happen quickly and will include a major paradigm shift in the way the current AGR program is manned, managed, and maintained. To engage this dynamic shift effectively, the CAR developed a strategy that outlines an 'action plan' including both short-term 'Quick Wins' and long-term 'Strategic Initiatives and Goals' to help achieve his aim. In April 2008, the CAR directed his staff to develop a viable FTS strategy that would help guide the principles and policies that would help 'shape' his FTS program in the future. In September 2008, the USAR published the *Army Reserve Strategy for Full-time Support (FTS) 2017* receiving input and guidance from the entire USAR staff and Human Resources Command-St. Louis and ensuring that each level of command had the opportunity to express their views on what they expected from an adequate future 'Operational' FTS program.

The 2017 strategy directed improvement to the future FTS program by applying the following three imperatives:

- Sustain the all-volunteer Army Reserve (Develop a new lifecycle personnel management system)
- Prepare forces for assured and recurring access (Train Soldiers and units for full-spectrum operations)

- Transform the Institution – Structure, Policies, Practices and Culture (Adapt organizational culture to the evolving operating environment)³³

These imperatives will serve as the overarching principles to assist the USAR staff in developing refining efforts and improving methods for the FTS programs in the future.

2017 Quick Wins

Supporting the imperatives is the first of the ‘Quick Wins.’ In October 2008, the CAR directed the initiation of an FTS/FTE 2017 Task Force whose primary purpose was to “take a strategic look at the current FTS program and determine the ‘FTS re-engineering’ efforts required to transform the FTS program from a Strategic Cold War legacy program to an Operational program capable of providing FTS at the right place, and right time, with the right capabilities within the ARFORGEN Cycles.”³⁴ This General Officer-led planning group will serve as an instrument to achieve the CAR’s strategic vision of the FTS program and would work to mitigate identified shortfalls in the program and capitalize on its current strengths. The CAR’s Strategic Vision for the future FTS is to achieve “a dynamic, responsive, and flexible program that optimizes support to an ARFORGEN-enabled Operational Reserve while promoting predictability and lifecycle development for FTS personnel.”³⁵ The group would be the first of its kind to serve as a dedicated asset to help guide the ‘way ahead’ and provide focus to shape the FTS force of the future.

The second ‘Quick Win’ is to continue pursuing increased FTS authorizations to help stem the shortfall of requirements generated by a USAR force continuously engaged in ‘global operations’. Motivating this effort was the desire to continue defining

“the right mix of FTS authorizations that were needed to support an ‘Operational Force’ and to place priority for future distribution of increased authorizations”³⁶ into units in the field with the direct input from the functional and operational commands within the USAR.

The third ‘Quick Win’ was to undertake an external evaluation of the FTS program by revisiting a prior RAND study to properly look at new methods to achieve the CAR’s intent to transform the force. The first study concentrated mainly on requirements and authorizations.³⁷ To get a better understanding of the problem, the CAR also wanted to look into the capabilities and competencies³⁸ that are required to shape FTS solutions in the future. This study was projected for completion by the end of FY 09. The CAR received a briefing on the Draft-Not for Release unofficial results/findings in December 2009. The official releasable results/findings are still forthcoming. Commissioning this type of internal review by an external organization should pay dividends in the future as it allows for a disinterested party to impart guidance and suggestions on ways to improve the USAR FTS program without officially directing a change.

The final ‘Quick Win’ or ‘Force Shaping Option’ will have the most immediate effect to current composition of the AGR force in the near future. In April of 2010, the Army will conduct the first annual AGR Release from Active Duty (REFRAD) board. The Army Reserve has not held a REFRAD-related board since 2004. “The 2004 board (and similar prior boards) considered all eligible AGR commissioned officers and warrant officers for extension beyond 20 years active service (AS), requiring those that the board did not select to either retire or leave active duty for another Reserve status

upon reaching active-duty retirement eligibility.³⁹ From 2005 to 2010 AGR officers have been allowed to remain on active duty until they reached their Mandatory Removal Date (MRD). The lack of REFRAD boards through these years created a surplus of senior officers in the program. The officers that were allowed to remain on active duty past the original AS limit of 20 years started to limit the upward progression of junior officers whose promotion capability was dependent upon available positions. The 2010 board will help to correct this problem by considering COLs and LTCs who have met the criteria for active retirement (20 years of Active Federal Service and three years' time in current grade). According to the REFRAD memorandum, this board provides a fair and equitable force shaping process to help meet the needs of the Army, the United States Army Reserve,⁴⁰ and the AGR Program. Implementing the REFRAD policy in the AGR program will serve as a valuable tool to manage the number and ranks of Soldiers retained in the program. If used wisely, it will cultivate upward progression for aspiring officers and NCOs. However, the USAR must be careful not to automatically dismiss Soldiers whose skills will be greatly needed in the future to gain immediate short- term advances today.

Another immediate shaping effort is the CARs desire to pursue select objectives and sequence numbers⁴¹ in the program. Achieving this capability will assist the AR in controlling promotion rates, forecast future requirements, and help aid in reducing the amount of volatility in the in the program.⁴²

2017 Strategic Initiatives

The CAR also directed four Strategic Initiatives to help shape the future of the FTS program. Three of the four directly relate to shaping the AGR program.

- Initiative 1: Leverage the Operational and Functional Commands in FTS Program Management⁴³ - This initiative seeks to allow the operational and functional (O&F) commands more direct influence on the methods and means of which their FTS assets are distributed and managed within their force. It also strives to provide a more direct link from the O&F level to HRC to collaborate on future career management functions.
- Initiative 3: Provide responsiveness and flexibility in the programming, allocation and execution of FTS or Full Time Equivalent (FTE) resources in the Army Reserve⁴⁴ – This initiative was proposed to try and search for alternative ways to source and fund FTS requirements as they are needed, and to seek to break down the barriers of being tied to a fixed programming process. Meeting the needs of today's USAR requires more independent and fluid resource programming methods to be able to support the dynamics of 'Operational Reserve' in the midst of transformation. Breaching these strict constraints on FTS resources will allow the USAR to place FTS personnel when and where they need them most.
- Initiative 4: Transform Management of the Existing AGR force to Better Support an ARFORGEN-enabled Operational Reserve⁴⁵ - This initiative underscores the importance of tying AGR assignments to the ARFORGEN model. Prioritizing the placement of AGRs and linking the future slotting of AGR soldiers within USAR units based on ARFORGEN forecasted operational needs is essential to the management of the AGR program. In short, AGRIMIS (the current AGR

management system) needs to be in line with the true requirements of the ‘Operational Army Reserve’.

Analysis and Recommendations

Career Management

Change will not come easily for the USAR. Combining career management resources and consolidating personnel functions with the AC will assist the USAR in transitioning its AGR force into a more functional ‘operational’ capability. For now, both career management components remain geographically dispersed with one in St. Louis and the other in Alexandria. This geographical dispersion continues to foster segregation between the two components as AGRs continue to manage AGRs and AC manage AC. In the future, as they move to one central location at Fort Knox, the collaboration and cooperation between the USAR and AC will increase. I’m not sure if you will ever see them cross-pollinate and manage each other’s Soldiers but I am confident that the move and consolidation will help foster increased personnel policy standardization, direction, and oversight of the USAR program.

The USAR must strive to change its current way of managing the USAR AGR force to more of a collective career program rather than an ‘assign and forget’ placement program. Actively managing the Soldiers’ careers is something that the Active Component does well and that the USAR must improve. The AC manages its Soldiers by using career development models as a guide for the placement of its Soldiers. However, in the USAR this has just recently become a topic of discussion and is just now starting to be considered as a tool for USAR HRC Career Managers (CM) to use in their screening criteria when reassigning AGR Soldiers in the program.

Recently, the USAR has also made significant progress in providing ‘career path management’ for AGR Soldiers, by pulling away from just filling the first available slot that is open when an AGR Soldier needs to transfer. This is large part is due to the CAR’s efforts to push his staff to ‘operationalize’ the force and move them to more challenging assignments while balancing the demands of ARFORGEN.

Careful consideration must be given to who the USAR assigns to serve as Career Managers (CM) to shape the future AGR force. The proper execution of career management functions on behalf of the USAR is imperative for the program to succeed. Enforcing stringent screening criteria when selecting new CMs to serve at HRC will ensure that the USAR has the best soldiers available to help guide the ‘way ahead.’ These ‘highly screened and selected’ CMs will be capable of making intelligent and timely assignment decisions to increase the operational effectiveness of the program and enhance the careers of AGR Soldiers. Assigning Soldiers as CMs who know ‘what right looks like,’ who’ve worked in operationally challenging positions, and who have had the opportunity to serve in units at multiple levels will afford these CMs with the ‘operational’ knowledge that is desperately needed to better manage the USAR AGR force.

Creating Stronger AGRs

Offering increased Leadership, Joint, and Active Component assignments for AGRs will continue to pay dividends for the USAR by exposing them to operations outside the Army Reserve. Allowing AGRs to serve in these positions over the past ten years has contributed to a significant rise in the ‘operational’ capabilities of many of the current serving AGRs. These types of positions are essential in creating stronger,

'battle tested,' 'socialized' AGRs who are exposed to the most recent updates in Training, Doctrine, Tactics and Leadership opportunities that they can bring back and apply to future assignments in the USAR.

Collaborative Gains

The Army should consider implementing a program that alternates AGR Soldiers into AC assignments and AC Soldiers into AGR assignments on a routine basis. Doing this will help 'season' AGR Soldiers and provide a means of relief for constantly deploying AC Soldiers. This effort is a 'win-win' option since it allows 'seasoned' AC Soldiers the opportunity to stabilize and share their valuable experience with the USAR community while simultaneously exposing AGRs to more deployment opportunities and affording them more possibilities to deploy in situations that can enhance their operational understanding of the Active and Joint communities.

In order for this program to succeed, the AC and USAR leadership must support it. It must also be managed in a way that is clearly beneficial for both parties and cannot be allowed to revert back to the old AC/RC program that we had in the past. Establishing the expectation for both AC and AGR Soldiers to participate in this program will help blur the lines between both components and allow greater flexibility for the Army and Army Reserve to 'plug and play' Soldiers into demanding operational requirements as necessary to mitigate personnel shortfalls in each component.

One Active Force

This is the closest option to meeting the recommendation proposed by CNGR to totally replacing AGRs with AC soldiers by making everyone part of 'One Active Force.' This is similar to the Collaborative Gains option except it would entail merging both Title

10 (AC/USAR AGR) entities to create one full-time force supporting the Active Army and Army Reserve, rather than just rotating AC/AGR Soldiers between each component. Combining both components would facilitate the use of one personnel management structure, a single set of standards for promotions, and allow for more flexible assignment options for both forces by offering these new ‘One Active Force’ Soldiers the ability to serve in both Compo 1(Active) and Compo 3 (Army Reserve) assignments throughout their career.

At first glance, this option appears as the most beneficial and easiest program to implement. However, major conflicts over the fair distribution of limited FTS assets between both components, and the reduction of resident expertise in the USAR will develop within a few years. These conflicts will far out-weight the immediate known advantages and serve to introduce new challenges for the USAR by removing their existing and growing capability to readily shift FTS to USAR requirements as needed.

Conclusion

AGR Soldiers are a critical component of the full-time support package for the USAR. Assessing, supporting, and maintaining the right mix of ‘operationally’ effective AGR Soldiers will assist the USAR in reaching its transformation goal. Following the initiatives as directed in the CAR’s *2017 Strategy* will definitely shape the force for years to come. Continuing to implement changes, seeking opportunities to increase the ‘operational’ skills sets of AGRs, and actively providing career guidance are vital to keeping the USAR AGR system relevant and ready in the future.

Will current AGRs eventually be replaced with Active Component Soldiers as recommended in the CNGR report, or will the CARs force shaping measures

adequately transition the current program into a force that meets the needs of the ‘Operational Reserve?’ Perhaps the AC and USAR will seek more opportunities to merge their full-time forces and share the benefits of increased populations that can be moved between each component to fill critical personnel shortages.

Undoubtedly, some form of the current AGR program will always be needed to augment the full-time support requirements “to organize, administer recruit, instruct, and train the RC.”⁴⁶ Clearly, there are multiple initiatives underway to shape the future composition and direction of the USAR AGR program. Both the CAR and the CNGR believe that the force needs improvement to support the growing demands of an ‘Operational Reserve’ while striving to ‘man’ the force with professional, flexible operationally proficient Soldiers.

Irrefutably, the USAR AGR program is deep in the midst of change and it will not remain the same legacy force as in the past. The CAR recognized the need for change, directed actions to mitigate shortfalls with the current system, and has paved the way to grooming a superior full-time force. This significant investment in time and resources to ‘operationalize’ the AGR force will pay big dividends for the Army Reserve and increase the warfighting capability of the Army.

Endnotes

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